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Turkish report sheds light on Bulgarian link to Pope's assailant

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Further evidence has come to light to support charges that Bulgaria assisted the Turk who shot Pope John Paul II in 1981.

A still unreleased report by Turkish interrogators into the activities of Mehmet Ali Agca, who tried to kill the Pope, has significantly advanced understanding of his terrorist activities.

The 88-page report is the result of a reinvestigation, launched by the Turkish government in 1983, into the 1979 murder of Abdi Ipekci, a liberal Istanbul newspaper editor and one of Turkey's most respected figures. Mr. Agca has been convicted of that murder.

The report also describes in detail a sophisticated program for promoting destabilization and terrorism, in Turkey and elsewhere, with the ultimate aim of serving what the report terms Warsaw Pact purposes. Key revelations include the following:

- Agca was brought to Syria in the summer of 1978 by Teslim Tore, the head of Turkey's pro-communist People's Liberation Army. While there, Agca says he was trained in the "use of weapons, explosives, cold-war concepts, how to carry out coups d'état, and related revolutionary history."

- Agca says he met Bulgarian agents in Damascus, the capital of Syria, and received money from them to deliver to two leftist labor groups in Turkey. The money was to be used to fund subversive activities.

- Working under the direct tutelage of Abuzer Ugurlu, a reputed Turkish mafia "godfather," in Istanbul, Agca and his accomplices established an organization with the specific political aims of undermining "capitalism" and of severing Turkey's ties with the West.

- Agca developed a wide range of associations with a Turkish terrorist organization, the Gray Wolves — both as a "cover" and in order to draw rightist terrorists into supporting anti-Western goals. But he never became a Gray Wolf himself or joined the outlawed National Action Party with which the Gray Wolves were associated. (Both are rightist groups led by Col. Alpaslan Turkes.) In spite of widespread leftist allegations that Agca had killed Mr. Ipekci at the instigation of the National Action Party, no link could be found.

- Mr. Ugurlu was in continual contact

with Bulgarian agents working out of the Bulgarian consulate in Istanbul. His alleged mafia operations involved the supply of arms to various factions throughout Turkey's political spectrum and to both right and left in Iran via Turkey.

- Along with Mr. Tore, one of Agca's closest associates in every phase of his activities was Oral Celik, a childhood friend who was also involved with the Bulgarians.

In Istanbul, Agca, Mr. Celik, and Tore pursued a strategy, according to Agca, "directed toward first separating Turkey from the Western powers and drawing it into the nonaligned group and then had the aim of getting it to join the Warsaw Pact. . . .

"The reason for our activity was ideological. But I can also say that there was the adventure factor in addition. In that period I saw myself as a progressive.

"... From a political point of view we had relations with hundreds of members of both the right and the left as well as the mafia . . . [who] were to play a secondary role to our own level of activity. Our goal was to fight against the Western democracies and destroy them. The possible contradiction in our position did not concern us. Bulgaria was seen as the country which could help us achieve our aim."

The Turkish report, though it leaves many questions about Agca and his activities unanswered, is the most valuable addition to our knowledge of Agca's activities since Italian Judge Ilario Martella's report in October 1984 on the alleged Bulgarian connection in the attempt on the Pope's life.

The full text of the Turkish report, like Judge Martella's, has still not been officially released. But lengthy excerpts appeared in *Hurriyet*, the leading Istanbul daily, on Feb. 1, the sixth anniversary.

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sary of Ipekci's murder.

The Turkish government reopened its case against Agca in early 1983, after the Italians had arrested Sergei Ivanov Antonov, a Bulgarian airline official living in Rome, and publicized the purported Bulgarian connection.

The Turkish investigation included detailed probing into the reputed mafia operations of Ugurlu, who was extradited from Germany to Turkey in March 1981 and was reported to have Bulgarian drug- and arms-smuggling connections going back to the 1960s.

Originally no link between Agca and Ugurlu was suspected. In his "confession" in the summer of 1979, Agca had cleverly shielded his sponsors and accomplices, claiming to have acted as a loner.

But it became clear, when the first phase of the new Turkish investigation was completed and Ugurlu and 23 accomplices (including Agca in absentia) were put on trial in March of last year, that the Turkish mafia godfather was a major figure behind Agca. Agca insisted he had no personal or ideological motive for participating in the Ipekci murder. It was, he said, simply part of his work for Ugurlu.

Agca believed Ugurlu was hostile to Ipekci and alleged that Ugurlu feared exposure in Ipekci's newspaper. Men on the paper's staff who were close to Ipekci, however, say he had no specific plans for exposés of smuggling activities. Whatever the motivations were, initial planning for the killing took place in Ugurlu's office.

The Turkish report appears to be silent about why Agca issued a threat against the Pope's life on his escape from prison in November 1979. Agca's explanation of the threat could help pinpoint when the plot to kill the Pope began to take shape.

An important aspect of the initial disinformation put out after he attacked the Pope was that Agca was motivated by Islamic fanaticism. But in everything

Agca said to the Turkish investigators, religion is remarkable for its absence.

The Turkish interrogations were carried out in Rome in 1983 by two of Turkey's most experienced specialists in terrorism, Maj. Onder Ayhan, an Air Force judge, and Tevfik Tunc-Onat, a military prosecutor. Agca was cooperative. They believe he was in most respects truthful. Much of what he said has been confirmed by cross-checking, additional investigation in Turkey, and comparison with information obtained independently from alleged accomplices in Agca's activities in Turkish and Italian custody.

It is clear from the report that Agca had close relations with the Bulgarians starting at least in 1978. This leads me to the same conclusion I reached in my book "The Plot to Kill the Pope" in July 1983:

"Historical, inferential, circumstantial, and solid factual evidence all point in the same direction to explain the plot against John Paul II — toward Moscow. The probability that the Kremlin leadership and the KGB were the architects of the plot to kill John Paul II is far greater in 1983 than it seemed in 1981. It is likely to be even greater in 1984 and 1985."

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